complete background behind our action in conducting nuclear tests and emphasised to them that our action should not be any cause of concern, and reiterated our continued commitment to global disarmament and peace.

Urban Land Celling Regulation Act

*172. DR. RANBIR SINGH:
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND:

Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS & EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Urban Land Ceiling Regulation Act, 1976 has failed to achieve any of its objective;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether there is any demand to repeal this Act; and

(d) if so, the reasons and the arguments therefor?

THE MINISTER OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI): (a) to (d) The Ubran Land (Ceiling & Regulation) Act, has failed to achieve its objectives due to its poor performance. Out of 2,20,675 ha. of estimated excess vacant land, 50,046 ha. of vacant land vested in the State Governments. Physical possession was acquired only of 19,020 ha. of vacant land by the State Governments. There has been a demand to repeal this Act so that the stock of urban land increases and development of urban land for various sectors namely housing, transport, industry, etc. may be availabale. The Legislatures of the State of Haryana and Punjab have passed a resolution of repealing the Act by the Parliament. The Government has decided to repeal this Act. Repeal of the Act will facilitate the availability and affordability of urban land, by increasing supply of urban land. It will also help is solving the shelter problem. as envisaged in the national agenda.

Growth rate of Steel Industry

*173. SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND:
DR. RANBIR SINGH:

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian steel industry grew at a rate lower than the GDP growth rate for the first time this year;

(b) if so, the reasons therefore; and

(c) the correctived measures proposed, if any?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK): (a) The growth rate of finished (carbon) steel vis-a-vis GDP growth rate during the last 3 years was as under:—

	Growth Rate	GDP Growth rate at 1980-81 prices
1995-96	2.08%	7.2%
1996-97(P)	6.2%	7.5%
1997-98(P)	(–) 0.7%	5.0%(A)

(P)—Provisional; (Q)—Quick estimates
(A)—Advance estimates
@ Source: Economic Survey 1997-98

(b)and (c) The growth of the steel sector is dependent upon the growth of the economy in general and growth of industrial production and infrastructure sector in particular.

The major reasons for slow growth during 1997-98 in the steel sector include:

(i) Sluggish demand in the steel consuming sectors;

(ii) Overall economic slow down in the country;

(iii) Lack of investment by Government/private sector in major infrastructure projects;